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Informal statement, Bishop Paul Moore

600,000 Forgotten People

The winds of change blow hard across the world. The great dramas of Eastern Europe and South Africa occupy the press. The United States makes pompous statements about the rights of self-determination of the people of Lithuania. All, it seems, have the right to decide who governs them except those who don't fit into the wind of this change.

Because on the other side of the globe from the United States, far from South Africa, far from Nicaragua, a people languish under one of the most oppressive regimes extant. I speak of the people of East Timor.

Last December, my wife Brenda and I visited East Timor, under the auspices of Asia Watch, a human rights committee located in New York. We wished to show our support for those who are struggling for their rights there and to gather as much first-hand information as our time there allowed.

Ms. Sidney Jones, the director of Asia Watch, introduced us to different people in Jakarta so that we might have a fuller understanding of East Timor before our visit. Among others, we met Ponce Princem, Slumet Bratanata, Jopie Lasut, of the New Life Prison Fellowship, and several refugees from East Timor who had associations with Fretellin. We called on the United States ambassador and his staff, and Ms. Joewano at C.S.I.S.

When we arrived in East Timor and checked into the Hotel Tourismo in Dili, we immediately sensed the presence of security forces. A prominent official from Jakarta occupied an adjoining room. Four or five security people accompanied him. During our visit we were told that many of the people with whom we met or even those with whom we had a casual exchange were interrogated about our conversations. Apparently, the tapping of telephones is so blatant that in one instance, we were told, the monitor requested the caller not to speak in Portuguese because the monitor only spoke Indonesian! All mail on and off the island is censored.

The military presence is oppressive. In Dili, soldiers roam the streets in uniform and carrying weapons. Benny Morandi, a prominent leader in the Indonesian military, came to the island when we were there and attended the blessing of the newly constructed Roman Catholic cathedral.

When we tried to drive up the coast to Bacau, we had a difficult time finding anyone who would drive us. As if by magic, no drive-yourself cars were available for hire in any of the agencies we checked with. En route we were stopped and questioned by military police six times. Truckloads of soldiers in combat gear passed us on the road. We observed many military vehicles including tanks. We were told by reliable sources that there are 24,000 troops in East Timor. Apparently, they harass the poor

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people in rural areas, forcing them to leave their farms which they then lay claim to and farm for profit. Each battalion commander, we were told, is a law unto himself. Colonel Probowo, President Suharto's son-in-law, was particularly notorious and apparently instigated the killing during the Pope's visit (SECTION MISSING FROM ESSA) AND THE SUBSEQUENT ARRESTS. HE ALSO RAIDED A CHURCH SCHOOL WHICH INCLUDED SMALL CHILDREN AS WELL AS TEENAG allegedly to find some the leaders of a demonstration pro independence. They fired their rifles and terrified the children. Many false arrests were made at the [redacted] demonstration which occured at the time of the Pope's visit. The boys, for that is what they were, were released but were tortured when they were arrested in order to make them admit to subversive behavior. At the time of our visit, twelve youths were still being held without trial. As I understand it, all but two are now free. However, when we met with Bishop Belo, we found over a dozen boys in residence for fear of arrest. They were idealistic, guileless young men.

The role of the church is crucial in East Timor. We called on Bishop Belo upon our arrival. Since we could not notify him of our visit ahead of time, he was suspicious and unwilling to talk at first. After a while he opened up and began to tell us of his predicament. On the one hand, he did not want to endanger his people nor to elicit sanctions against his institutions by the government. On the other hand, he is one of the few voices who dares to speak out. He is still harassed because of his appeal to the United Nations a year ago. He, and many of the other church leaders we spoke to, feel that their people are being threatened with cultural genocide and that they are losing hope of a better future. The Bishop feels it is essential to keep hope alive, especially for the younger generation, by insisting upon the East Timorese's right to have a referendum concerning the form of government they would like to have, in other words, to insist on their right to self-determination.

We attended the consecration of the new cathedral. Thousands were there at seven in the morning, a most moving ceremony. The irony of the event was that the government of Indonesia had given the money to build the cathedral with the intent of engraciating themselves with the local population.

We were impressed by the church-run schools. The Salesian fathers run a splendid school near Bacau, but are not allowed to bring in any more priests to help teach. However, despite the ambivalence of the government, the school is a vibrant hopeful place, and the young people beautiful, alert, and conscientious. The Jesuits and other religious groups have schools which we did not have time to see.

We left the island with many conflicting feelings. First of all, we were deeply touched by the suffering of these warm-hearted people and felt their sense of despair. And we admired the courage with which they face a seemingly bleak future. While it is

not for us to say what form the government should take, we affirm the momentum toward self-determination. However, in the meantime, we felt strongly that every effort should be made to educate the able young people in skills which they could use as the country is developed in the future, because it is inevitable that development will occur. If no Timorese are available to take charge, the higher paid jobs will go to others and once again the Timorese will be exploited.

The history of East Timor is an archetype of a small people destroyed by greed and geopolitics. For over 400 years, East Timor was part of the Portuguese empire. In 1974, for internal reasons, Portugal began to pull out from its colonial possessions, like Mozambique and Angola. As they released their hold on East Timor, local groups organized for independence. There was a good deal of infighting between the groups - FRETILIN, represented the more liberal wing, ADT was in the center, and a group called APODETI, were the most conservative. These labels are hardly appropriate for these small groups struggling for control of East Timor. The APODETI were strongly in favor of East Timor being part of Indonesia. FRETILIN was staunchly independent; some of its members who had been educated in Portugal were Marxists, but it was by no means a monolithic Marxist group. The ADT, who were for independence, was made up of more middle class people. In any case, there was a great deal of political activity, some fighting - a coalition between ADT and FRETILIN was broken up under pressure from Indonesia. To make a long story short, Indonesia finally invaded on December 7, 1975. By that time, the govorner, who was given no direct guidance from Lisbon, had withdrawn to an island. Some of his soldiers joined the Timorese forces. Those that remained, and his warships, stayed on the island and watched the Indonesians invade in force. This military invasion had no legal justification, no moral mandate. It was a flat-out self-aggrandizing land grab of a potentially rich province.

West Timor, the other half of the island, had historically been part of Dutch Indonesia, therefore when UNDER SUKARNO, INDONESIA became independent from the Dutch, West Timor became part of the Indonesian empire. However, there was no such LEGAL relationship between Indonesia and East Timor, since that had always been under the Portuguese.

The invasion occured on December 7, 1975, when 10,000 Indonesian troops supported by a large naval task force invaded East Timor. Hours before the invasion, President Ford and Henry Kissinger were in Jakarta, presumably blessing Indonesia's initiative. It is said that 80% of the military equipment used in the invasion was made in the United States. Ever since this miserable betrayal of a proud people by Henry Kissinger and his President, the East Timor scandal has continued. Between 150,000 and 200,000 people lost their lives in the invasion or the subsequent starvation caused by it. The killing has subsided, but after fifteen years, martial law is still in force.

Just a few weeks ago, Professor Antonio Barbedo of the University of Porto in Portugal asked us to attend an important conference about East Timor, which included academic experts on the subject, parliamentarians from the Portuguese Parliament, and other interested persons. After the conference, we had the opportunity of personally visiting with the Commission of East Timor, of the Portuguese Parliament. We also spent an hour with the Foreign Minister and an hour with President Soares.

Whatever their past apathy, the Portuguese are presently unanimous in calling for self-determination for East Timor. This is exactly what they should be doing and we encourage them to be even more forceful in bringing the matter up in International Organizations. They need help from the United States of America. Herein lies the problem.

Apparently we need Indonesia as a place for military bases and as an ally in the South Pacific, particularly with the uncertain status of the Philippine Islands. East Timor is also rich in oil resources. We are apparently unwilling to apply the principles we express for Lithuania on behalf of the people of East Timor, even though we were part of the original conspiracy whereby Indonesia took the country over in 1975. In the long run, our strategic interests, it seems to me, are not served by supporting such a travesty of justice. President Suharto is a arch-dictator; even in Indonesia itself, one hesitates to talk frankly unless it is clear there is no one listening nor any devices taping the conversation. And in East Timor, as I said earlier, the atmosphere is one of total military occupation and denial of all civil liberties. If we continue to support President Suharto and his regime, we will be repeating again the bitter history of Vietnam, Iran, Panama, El Salvador, Chile, and the rest. On the other hand, if we bring pressure to bear on Indonesia we will be allying ourselves with the future, because sooner or later Indonesia must join the rest of the world in shaking off it's dictatorship. I believe it would be possible for the United States in a community of nations, to influence foreign aid which presently goes to Indonesia in the amount of $4.5 billion. Recently, the Netherlands withheld their $100 million because of some unjust executions which occured in Indonesia. This is a situation where we could make a difference.

Unfortunately, Australia has presently recognized Indonesia de jure as well as de facto, and has made a deal for oil in the Timor Sea between Australia and Timor. They made this agreement with Indonesia, which legally has no right to make this agreement. Hopefully this will come before some International body for judication.

This means, however, that the United States and Portugal, who are the nations primarily responsible for the rape of East Timor by Indonesia, must be the nations that take the leadership in the International community and call for a referendum of self-

determination in East Timor. It's time for Congress to have another hearing on the matter, it's time for the various committees in Congress who are concerned to take action.